

# WELCOME TO AMERICAN LITERATURE!

American Literature  
Miss Detrick and Mrs. Poole

**Your Mission:** Answer the questions listed below by listing an animal as an answer. When answering, you may have more than one answer per question- just don't start listing all animals- only the ones that are really important to you. Follow your instincts when answering questions; when in doubt- don't answer (just remember you must answer as many as you can!).

1. When you were a child, what animal did you collect or obsess over that you are still attracted to today?
2. Of all animals if you can have any animal as a pet or companion what would it be?
3. When going to the zoo, which animal do you spend the most time with or are drawn to?
4. If you could be an animal, what animal would it be?
5. What animal is in your dreams that you have had since childhood?
6. What animal are you afraid of that you have no idea why you are afraid of it?
7. Of all animals, what animal are you most attracted to?
8. When you are out in nature, do you often see to run into the same animal?
9. What animal have you watched for hours?
10. What artwork or jewelry with a certain animal always attracts you?

# Native American Influences

American Literature  
Miss Detrick and Mrs. Poole

**History and Literature of the Times:** Before the arrival of Europeans in the fifteenth century, the Americas were already home to thriving populations of American Indians. These societies, each of which was usually made up of a few thousand people, had extensive histories and diverse cultures. Native Americans created a rich oral tradition that includes myths, epics, songs, and chants. Their stories and poems, which were originally told in hundreds of different languages, often teach moral lessons and focus on the natural world. Native American literature is rooted in oral tradition. Storytellers were highly valued members of Native American communities. They passed down myths that answered questions about the origins of the world and the place of humans and animals within it. Oral traditions captured the history of specific Native American groups, detailing their migrations and the challenges they faced after the arrival of the Europeans.

**Animal Totem Background:** In earlier days Native Americans understood that they were simply a part of the earth. They knew they were only one small part. Now many think humans are the greatest and most important part. But still, we are only a part of the earth, only a part of nature, only a child of Mother, only a part of Spirit. Native Americans used to know respect of Nature and killed only what they ate and used only the skins of what they killed and ate. Native Americans did not waste life nor disrespect spirits but honored and thanked them for providing them with life, nourishment, and comfort. In earlier days Native Americans gave recognition to the power of the animal spirits by wearing skins, masks, mimicking, singing praise, and prayers to specific animals. They painted the animals on their homes, caves, death chambers, and asked the Spirit to guide them to the animal that they consumed and bless the spirit of the animal they kill for they are a predator in the part of Nature and they honored the spirit of their prey. These acts allowed Native Americans to remain linked to the animal guides and to accept the power they offer in lessons, in life, and in death. It reminded us that all animals were our sisters, brothers, and cousins and most importantly our teachers and our friends. It reminded us that we too are animals with Spirit.



"I am a feather  
on the bright sky  
I am the blue horse  
that runs in the plain  
I am the fish that rolls,  
shining, in the water."  
- N. Scott Momaday



**Your Mission:** Create a Native American medicine bag depicting an accurate portrayal of who you are!

**Objective:** Analyze the characteristics of Native American literature and how issues influenced the writers of this time period.

## Directions:

1. Using your answers on the animal survey, you will determine your animal totem. Your life long animal totem will be the animal you have answered in at least three of these eleven questions. The more times the same animal is listed in your responses the more important and stronger it is in your life. The one that appeared most is your current animal spirit totem.
2. Go to [www.animalspirits.com](http://www.animalspirits.com) and find your animal(s). Take notes on the characteristics of the animal on the planning worksheet.
3. Begin creating your medicine bag following the requirements listed on the next page! A template has been provided, but you do not have to use this. Be creative! Use interesting materials that you find or have at home! This bag should represent who you are!
4. Present your medicine bag to the class. Remember that storytelling is an art form for Native Americans. Your presentation should reflect this art form (so get excited... don't bore us!).

# Medicine Bag Requirements and Planning Worksheet

My Animal Totem(s): \_\_\_\_\_

About My Animal: ([www.animalspirits.com](http://www.animalspirits.com))

---

---

---

---

---

---

Using the information gathered above, it's now time to create your medicine bag!

**What is a medicine bag?** Medicine bags are ancient personal empowerment tools. Spiritually representing the wearer, they contain that which is most Spiritually significant & healing to the individual to help guide and protect one on their journey. This might include collected Spirit objects or totems, a small feather, beads, horse hair, healing gemstones & crystals, seeds, photos & more. Those items that are important to the wearer protect, grounds them to our Mother Earth and the Creator, and brings them strength & healing.

**What to include on and in your medicine bag:**

**Front of bag:**

- Your Native American name. This should be derived from your animal and the meaning of the animal.
- A symbol that represents you.

**Back of bag:**

- A paragraph description of what your totem animal says about you. How are you like your totem animal? This is the "meat" of your project, so please be sure to spend time on writing a cohesive paragraph. This should include examples from your life of how you are like your animal. This should be about 10 sentences total.

**Inside of bag:**

- Find three things that symbolize who you are and include them in the medicine bag. This could be anything that you wouldn't typically find in a student's backpack. Sorry, no pencils or water bottles for this part! Perhaps a feather represents your "flightiness" or a quartz crystal represents your energy. Think of things that mean something to you and who you are! Native Americans believe that the items that are in your medicine bag are things that help guide you spiritually. These things are said to "heal" you or even others. You can continue to add things to your medicine bag as your life journey continues. One note though... only you can *open* your medicine bag!

My Native American Name: \_\_\_\_\_

My Symbol: \_\_\_\_\_

My Items to include in Bag:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Due Date:**  
**Thursday, August 26<sup>th</sup>**

**Points:**  
**25 points total**



"When you were born, you cried but the world rejoiced.  
Now go. Live your life honoring our ways.  
And when you are reborn to the Great Spirit,  
the world will cry and you will rejoice."

~Lakota ceremonial prayer